



Trans people face 'horrifying' rhetoric at statehouses



A group of LGBTQ advocates gathered outside the South Dakota Capitol in Pierre on Jan. 26, 2021, to protest a bill that would have banned people from updating the sex on their birth certificates. Associated Press



Gershwin Lee a headmaster who is more like a coach for his students



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Trans people face 'horrifying' rhetoric at statehouses

From Front

By **ANDREW DeMILLO**
Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — It was pharmacist Gwendolyn Herzig's first time testifying before a legislative committee when she spoke to several Arkansas lawmakers in a packed hearing room this month about a bill restricting gender-affirming care for minors.

Herzig, who is transgender, spoke out against the legislation and told the panel that one of the biggest obstacles trans people face is a lack of empathy. Only a few minutes later, a Republican lawmaker asked her an inappropriate question about her genitalia.

"It was horrifying," she said. The exchange, which was livestreamed on the Legislature's website and has since been widely shared on social media, is an example of the type of demeaning questions and rhetoric that transgender people meet when they show up to statehouses to testify against new bills targeting their rights.

In South Dakota, a lawmaker invoked "furries" — people who dress up as animals — when talking about gender-affirming care. In Montana, a legislator compared parents supporting their children in



Gwendolyn Herzig prepares to administer a shot of testosterone for a patient at Park West Pharmacy in Little Rock, Ark. on Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2023.

Associated Press

finding treatment to asking doctors to carry out medically assisted suicide.

Advocates worry that increasingly hostile rhetoric about transgender people could have a chilling effect on those who want to speak out against new restrictions and could do lasting damage to a community of trans youth that is already marginalized.

"I feel like that's what they're trying to do, to keep us from coming and

exercising this right that we have," said Rumba Yambu, executive director of Intransitive, an advocacy and support group for transgender people in Arkansas. "Because who wants to go and be asked about their genitalia in front of a bunch of strangers? Especially strangers in power." So far this year, at least 150 bills targeting transgender people have been introduced, which is the highest in a single year, according

to the Human Rights Campaign.

Bans on gender-affirming care for minors have already been enacted this year in South Dakota and Utah, and Republican governors in Tennessee and Mississippi are expected to sign similar bans into law. Arkansas and Alabama have bans that were temporarily blocked by federal judges.

The push has included efforts in some states to re-

strict gender-affirming care for adults and proposed bans on drag shows that opponents have warned would also discriminate against transgender people.

Herzig came to the state Capitol to testify against a bill attempting to reinstate Arkansas' ban on gender-affirming care for minors by making it easier to file malpractice lawsuits against providers. In her testimony, Herzig talked about working with transgender patients who are on hormone replacement therapy.

"Bills like SB199 are designed to hinder, not help, Arkansans by creating barriers to evidence-driven health care they deserve under the guise of helping the young and innocent," she said, later saying a vote for the bill was "unpatriotic, and casts doubts on our own health and research institutions who have worked through health care fields to improve the lives of Americans."

During follow-up questions, Republican Sen. Matt McKee asked Herzig if she is transgender.

When she said yes, he asked: "Do you have a penis?"

The question was met with jeers and audible gasps in the packed committee room. □



A computer-run, modular device that customizes drug infusions for individual patient's is seen inside a patient's room in the COVID-19 Intensive Care Unit at a medical center May 8, 2020, in Seattle.

Associated Press

By **AMANDA SEITZ**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal officials said Monday they're working to cut down on a growing backlog of complaints lodged

against health care providers, insurers or government agencies by patients who claim their civil rights or privacy have been violated. Americans filed more than 51,000 complaints against

Feds promise to trim backlog of health care investigations

health agencies last year, a number that has grown tremendously — 69% — over the last five years, the federal Health and Human Services agency announced. Some complaints can take years to investigate.

About two-thirds of the cases involve potential violations of health information privacy and security, a problem that has worsened in recent years because of data breaches and cybersecurity hacks, the agency said.

In 2021, more than 700 large breaches of health information were reported.

Health insurer Anthem, for example, was forced to pay the government a record \$16 million fine in 2018 after a data breach affecting about 79 million people — including names, birthdates, Social Security numbers and medical IDs.

Health care workers and patients can file federal complaints against providers, insurers, and government agencies when they think patients are being discriminated against or protected health information has been shared, a violation of a longstanding law known as HIPAA, or the

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. HHS' Office of Civil Rights is responsible for investigating those complaints.

The office will reorganize in an effort to more quickly investigate such complaints, the agency said Monday.

The office will keep a dedicated division to investigate HIPAA complaints, with a focus on the growing segment of cybersecurity breaches. It will also have three new different divisions with staff that focus on each of the following: policy, strategic planning, and enforcement. □

Harris promotes broadband in South Carolina as 2024 looms

By MEG KINNARD

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) —

Vice President Kamala Harris promoted the Biden administration's achievements on broadband internet access during a visit to South Carolina, recently minted as the site of Democrats' first presidential votes of the 2024 campaign.

In Monday's trip, her fourth to the early-voting state since becoming vice president, Harris lauded more than \$175 million being spent to help improve high-speed internet infrastructure at historically Black colleges and institutions, which she called "centers of academic excellence."

"Many of those that we focus on currently do not have reliable access to high-speed internet on campus," said Harris, herself a graduate of an HBCU. "This means that more students will be able to use the internet for their everyday needs."

Harris' remarks to a room of at least 100 supporters and student leaders from Benedict College, an HBCU in Columbia, came as Democrats' national attention hones in on South Carolina, where a landslide 2020 primary win gave Joe Biden the momentum to notch Super Tuesday wins and bounce several opponents from the race.



Vice President Kamala Harris gives remarks on broadband internet expansion on Monday, Feb. 27, 2023, at Benedict College in Columbia, S.C.

Associated Press

Biden has repeatedly acknowledged the state's pivotal role in his nomination as well as the significance of its heavily Black Democratic electorate. During remarks at a fundraiser last year, Harris thanked South Carolina Democrats, who "set President Joe Biden and me on a path to the White House."

Late last year, Biden asked the Democratic National Committee to move the state to the top of the presidential primary voting calendar, which party officials did this month. Via its email lists, South Carolina's Democratic Party has already

begun selling buttons, mugs and apparel flaunting the state's new status with the tagline "South Carolina Democrats Pick Winners."

But Harris' appearance also comes as a debate swirls over whether Biden — who, at age 80, is the nation's oldest president — should seek a second term in office, as is widely expected. According to a poll released this month from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, just 37% of Democrats said they wanted Biden to seek a second term.

Though he's long said it's

his intent to seek reelection, Biden has yet to make it official, struggling to dispel questions about whether he's too old to continue serving as president. In an exclusive interview last week with The Associated Press, first lady Jill Biden gave one of the clearest indications yet that her husband will run in 2024, saying that there's "pretty much" nothing left to do but figure out the time and place for the announcement.

The Republican candidate field is already forming, with a focus on South Carolina, home to the first GOP presidential primary

in the South. Former President Donald Trump held a campaign event in the Statehouse last month, and former Gov. Nikki Haley announced her candidacy in Charleston a few weeks later. Sen. Tim Scott is also mulling a potential bid.

Equalizing access to high-speed internet has been a priority for Biden, who in 2021 signed into law a \$1 trillion infrastructure package that, alongside traditional public works projects like building roads and bridges, included \$65 billion for broadband expansion. Expanding broadband internet availability also has been a top priority for Rep. Jim Clyburn, one of the White House's top Capitol Hill supporters and South Carolina's lone congressional Democrat. Clyburn, the chamber's assistant Democratic leader, has long advocated for more widespread internet access nationwide, pushing for affordable, high-speed networks in rural communities.

Last week, Clyburn appeared alongside Republican Gov. Henry McMaster to announce the formation of a program — funded by the bipartisan infrastructure package — designed to identify the areas of greatest need in South Carolina and invest in broadband infrastructure. □

Supreme Court to hear challenge to consumer agency

By JESSICA GRESKO

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court said Monday it will take up a Republican-led challenge to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, a case that could threaten how the consumer watchdog agency functions. It is the second time in three years that the justices will be examining the federal agency, which was created in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

The case will not be heard before October. That's

when the court begins its next term. Late last year, a federal appeals court — the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit — ruled that the agency's funding structure is unconstitutional, threatening its ability to function. The Biden administration asked the high court to review that decision, which it has now agreed to do.

The administration said the lower court's ruling "calls into question virtually every action the CFPB has taken" since its creation. The decision "threatens to inflict im-

mense legal and practical harms on the CFPB, consumers, and the nation's financial sector," the administration said.

Since the bureau was created more than a decade ago by the Dodd-Frank Act, it has varied in its aggressiveness. During the Obama administration, it used its muscle to collect fines from banks and credit card companies; during the Trump administration, it drastically scaled back enforcement actions. Republicans have argued that the agency has un-



Light illuminates part of the Supreme Court building at dusk on Capitol Hill in Washington, Nov. 16, 2022.

Associated Press

checked power. The case the justices agreed to hear centers on the agency's funding. Unlike a majority of agencies, the CFPB does not get its funding from the annual budget process in Congress. Instead, it is

funded directly by the Federal Reserve. The agency's budget is capped at 12% of the total operating expenses of the Federal Reserve System. In the 2022 fiscal year, the agency received about \$640 million. □

DeSantis takes over Disney district, punishing company

By **ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE**

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) —

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Monday signed a bill that gives him control of Walt Disney World's self-governing district, punishing the company over its opposition to the so-called "Don't Say Gay" law.

The bill requires DeSantis, a Republican, to appoint a five-member board to oversee the government services that the Disney district provides in its sprawling theme park properties in Florida.

"Today the corporate kingdom finally comes to an end," he said at a bill signing ceremony in Lake Buena Vista. "There's a new sheriff in town, and accountability will be the order of the day."

The signing came as DeSantis gears up for an expected presidential run and marks a high-profile legislative victory for a governor whose leveraging of cultural and political divides has pushed him to the fore of national Republican politics.

The takeover of the Disney district began last year when the entertainment giant, facing intense pressure, publicly opposed "Don't Say Gay," which bars instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through third grade and lessons deemed



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis speaks, Feb. 15, 2023, at Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

not age-appropriate.

DeSantis moved to quickly to penalize the company, directing lawmakers in the GOP-dominated Legislature to dissolve Disney's self-governing district during a special legislative session, beginning a closely watched restructuring process. DeSantis and other Republican critics of Disney slammed the company for coming out against the education law, calling it a purveyor of "woke" ideology that inject inappropriate subjects into children's entertainment.

This month, the governor called on lawmakers to

return to the Capitol for another special session to finalize state control of the district, as well as approve legislation around some of his other key legislative priorities on immigration and voter fraud. In taking on Disney, DeSantis furthered his reputation as a culture warrior willing to battle perceived political enemies and wield the power of state government to accomplish political goals, a strategy that is expected to continue ahead of his potential White House run.

The feud also reinforced the governor's brash, go-it-alone leadership style, pe-

nalizing a massive employer, tourism driver and political donor in the state over the company's stance on a piece of legislative policy. DeSantis, whose book, "The Courage to be Free," is coming out Tuesday, has moved in recent weeks to expand his political network through fundraisers and meetings with donors, elected officials and conservative influencers, adding to the speculation around his larger political aspirations.

The coming months will be critical to DeSantis as he builds his profile out beyond Florida. He is expect-

ed to utilize the coming regular legislative session, which begins next week, to bolster his conservative agenda before he announces his candidacy for president.

The new law changes the district's name from the Reedy Creek Improvement District to the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District and subjects it to various layers of state oversight. Board members were previously named through entities controlled by Disney.

It leaves the district and its financial abilities and debt obligations intact, addressing a chief concern of surrounding governments. It also prevents people who have worked with or contracted with a theme park in the past three years from serving on the district's new governing board.

At his news conference, DeSantis said he would appoint Tampa attorney Martin Garcia as the chairman of the district's new governing board, along with new board members Bridget Ziegler, a conservative school board member and wife of the Florida Republican party chairman Christian Ziegler; Brian Aungst Jr., an attorney and son of a former two-term Republican mayor of Clearwater; Mike Sasso, an attorney; and Ron Peri, head of The Gathering USA ministry. □

Ex-SC mayor taking over White House Office of Engagement



Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin speaks at a campaign rally for Democratic Senate hopeful Jaime Harrison of South Carolina, Oct. 26, 2020, in Columbia, S.C.

Associated Press

By **MEG KINNARD**

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) —

President Joe Biden on Monday announced the

appointment of former Columbia, South Carolina, Mayor Steve Benjamin as a top adviser, filling a key White House role from a

state that has become crucial to the Democratic Party ahead of the 2024 election cycle.

Benjamin will become director of the White House Office of Engagement. He takes over from another former mayor, Keisha Lance Bottoms, who had assumed the role in June and is returning to Atlanta, officials said.

Benjamin will oversee White House efforts "to ensure community leaders, diverse perspectives, and new voices have the opportunity to inform the work of the President in an inclusive, transparent and responsi-

ble way," according to the White House. In a release, Biden called Benjamin a "longtime public servant" whose "deep relationships across the country" would well serve the administration.

Benjamin, 53, has long been considered a rising star in Democratic politics, serving three terms as Columbia's mayor, and the first Black mayor in the city's history. Serving as president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and African Americans Mayors Association, Benjamin spoke at the 2016 Democratic National Convention and was among

the candidates considered for Hillary Clinton's running mate that year. He opted not to run for a fourth term in 2021.

The appointment comes at a time when Benjamin's home state is becoming even more critical to Democrats as they face the 2024 presidential campaign. Earlier this year, the Democratic National Committee voted to hold their first nominating contest of the next cycle in South Carolina, supplanting Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada in an effort to more deeply represent the desires of Black voters. □

U.K., EU hail 'new chapter' with deal to fix Brexit trade spat

By JILL LAWLESS

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. and the European Union sealed a deal on Monday to resolve their thorny post-Brexit trade dispute over Northern Ireland, hailing the agreement as the start of a "new chapter" in their often fractious relationship. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the grandly titled "Windsor Framework" after agreeing to the final details in Windsor, near London.

Von der Leyen told a news conference it was "historic what we have achieved today." Sunak said there had been a "decisive breakthrough."

The agreement, which will allow goods to flow freely to Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K., ends a dispute that has soured U.K.-EU relations, sparked the collapse of the Belfast-based regional government and shaken Northern Ireland's decades-old peace process.

Fixing it ends a long-running irritant for von der Leyen and is a big victory for Sunak — but not the end of his troubles. Selling the deal to his own Conservative Party and its Northern Irish allies may be a tougher struggle. Now Sunak awaits the judgment of Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party, which is boycotting the region's power-sharing government until the trade ar-



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, right, greets European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the Fairmont Hotel in Windsor, England, Monday Feb. 27, 2023.

Associated Press

rangements are changed to its satisfaction.

Sunak is due to make a statement to the House of Commons later setting out details of the deal.

Northern Ireland is the only part of the U.K. that shares a border with an EU member, the Republic of Ireland. When the U.K. left the bloc in 2020, the two sides agreed to keep the Irish border free of customs posts and other checks because an open border is a key pillar of Northern Ireland's peace process.

Instead, there are checks on some goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K. That angered British unionist politicians in Belfast, who say

the new trade border in the Irish Sea undermines Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom.

The Democratic Unionist Party collapsed Northern Ireland's Protestant-Catholic power-sharing government a year ago in protest and has refused to return until the rules are scrapped or substantially rewritten. The party's leader, Jeffrey Donaldson, said there had been "significant progress" but "key issues of concern" remained. He said the party would study the details before responding.

The devil, as ever, will be in those details, and the two sides emphasized different elements of the deal.

Sunak said the new rules

"removed any sense of a border in the Irish Sea" by eliminating checks and paperwork for the vast majority of goods entering Northern Ireland. Only those destined to travel onward to EU member Ireland will be checked.

He said Northern Ireland's lawmakers would be able to block any changes to EU goods laws that applied to them by using an emergency mechanism labeled the "Stormont Brake" after the home of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

"Today's agreement delivers smooth-flowing trade within the whole United Kingdom, protects Northern Ireland's place in our union and safeguards sov-

ereignty for the people of Northern Ireland," Sunak said.

Von der Leyen stressed that the EU's borderless single market would be protected by safeguards including "IT access, labels and enforcement procedures" and said the European Court of Justice would remain "the sole and ultimate arbiter of EU law."

The role of the European court in resolving any disputes that arise over the rules has been the thorniest issue in the talks. The U.K. and the EU agreed in their Brexit divorce deal to give the European court that authority. But the DUP and Conservative Party euroskeptics insist the court must have no jurisdiction in U.K. matters.

The British pound rose against the dollar after the deal was announced, and business groups welcomed the agreement. Tony Danker, who heads the Confederation of British Industry, said it would "allow businesses and politicians to turn their attention to economic growth and delivering greater prosperity."

Sunak will have to face down his Conservative critics — including former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who as leader at the time signed off on the trade rules that he now derides. Johnson was ousted by the Conservatives last year over ethics scandals, but is widely believed to hope for a comeback. □

China accuses U.S. of 'bullying' with new 'illegal' sanctions

BEIJING (AP) — China on Monday accused the U.S. of "outright bullying and double standards" in leveling what it called "illegal" sanctions on Chinese companies as part of U.S. actions against Russia's Wagner Group and related companies and individuals. The entities were targeted for their role in the war in Ukraine and mercenary activities, including human rights abuses, in Africa.

The sanctions "have no basis in international law or authorization from the Security Council, and are typical illegal unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing. "While the U.S. has intensified its efforts to send weapons to one of the parties to the conflict, resulting in an endless war, it has frequently spread false information about

China's supply of weapons to Russia, taking the opportunity to sanction Chinese companies for no reason," she said. "This is outright bullying and double standards." The Treasury and State departments announced the moves in coordinated statements that targeted dozens of Wagner Group affiliates, including some in the Central African Republic and the United Arab Emirates, as



Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., right, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., left, speak during a news conference on legislation labeling the Russian Wagner Group as one of the Foreign Terrorist Organizations, Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

well as the president of Russia's Kalashnikov Concern,

the original manufacturer of the AK-47 assault rifle. □

Mexican president disparages pro-democracy demonstrators

By **FABIOLA SANCHEZ**

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's president lashed out Monday at demonstrators who protested cuts to election funding over the weekend, belittling their concerns about threats to democracy and dashing any hopes that he would try to ease rising political tensions.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador seemed to revel in the conflict, hurling insults at the tens of thousands of people who demonstrated in Mexico City's main plaza, calling them thieves and allies of drug traffickers.

"There was an increase in the number of pick pockets stealing wallets here in the Zocalo, but what do you want, with so many white-collar criminals in one place?" López Obrador said at his daily morning press briefing.

At the root of the conflict are plans by López Obrador, which were approved last week by Mexico's Senate, to cut salaries and funding for local election offices, and scale back training for citizens who operate and oversee polling stations. The changes would also reduce sanctions for candidates who fail to report campaign spending.

López Obrador denies the reforms are a threat to democracy and says criticism is elitist. He argues that the



Anti-government demonstrators protest against recent reforms pushed by President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to the country's electoral law that they say threaten democracy, in Mexico City's main square, The Zocalo, Sunday, Feb. 26, 2023.

Associated Press

funds should be redirected to helping the poor.

Riffing on the protesters' slogan "Don't touch the INE (National Electoral Institute)," López Obrador said their slogans were "Don't touch corruption," "Don't touch privileges," "Don't touch the Narco Government."

"They don't care about democracy, what they want is to continue with the oligarchy, the rule of the rich," the president said.

Demonstrators say the electoral law changes approved last week threaten democracy and could mark a return to past practices of vote manipulation.

Few at Sunday's demonstration had any kind words for López Obrador, either.

"The path he is taking is toward socialism, communism," said Fernando Gutierrez, 55, a small businessman. "That's obvious, from the aid going to Cuba," Gutierrez said. López Obrador has imported coronavirus vaccines, medical workers and stone railway ballast from Cuba, but has shown little taste for socialist policies at home.

Sunday's demonstrators were clad mostly in white and pink — the color of the National Electoral Institute — and shouted slogans like "Don't Touch my

Vote!" Like a similar but somewhat larger protest on Nov. 13, the demonstrators appeared somewhat more affluent than those at the average demonstration. The heated nature of the debate drew attention from the U.S. government. "Today, in Mexico, we see a great debate on electoral reforms that are testing the independence of electoral and judicial institutions," Brian A. Nichols, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for Western hemisphere affairs, wrote in his Twitter account. "The United States supports independent, well-resourced electoral institutions that strengthen

democratic processes and the rule of law."

López Obrador said last Thursday that he'll sign the changes into law, even though he expects court challenges. Many at Sunday's protest expressed hope that Mexico's Supreme Court would overturn some of the changes, as courts have done with other presidential initiatives. Lorenzo Cordova, the head of the National Electoral Institute, has said the reforms "seek to cut thousands of people who work every day to guarantee trustworthy elections, something that will of course pose a risk for future elections."

The president's strident pushback against the judiciary, as well as regulatory and oversight agencies, has raised fears among some that he is seeking to reinstitute the practices of the old PRI, which bent the rules to retain Mexico's presidency for 70 years until its defeat in the 2000 elections.

Elections in Mexico are expensive by international standards, in part because almost all legal campaign financing is, by law, supplied by the government. The electoral institute also issues the secure voter ID cards that are the most commonly accepted form of identification in Mexico, and oversees balloting in the remote and often dangerous corners of the country. □



Haitian interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue attends the 11th general conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) at the Austria Center in Vienna, Nov. 28, 2005.

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Gérard Latortue, a for-

mer interim prime minister of Haiti who helped rebuild

Gérard Latortue, former interim Haitian premier, dies at 88

and unite the country after a violent coup in the mid-2000s, has died. He was 88. Prime Minister Ariel Henry announced Latortue's death Monday, saying it was a tremendous loss for the nation. He described Latortue as "a reformer, a convinced patriot, an eminent technocrat, a voice of change, of development (and) a supporter of democracy."

Latortue was a former exile who was sworn in as interim prime minister in March

2004 following months of bloodshed and political strife that left more than 300 dead and culminated in the ouster of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The turmoil at the time prompted the U.S. military to escalate its mission in Haiti. In a July 2004 interview with The Associated Press in Washington, Latortue vowed to fight corruption and disarm powerful gangs as he requested \$1.3 billion from the international community to help rebuild Haiti

after the violent revolt.

In September 2005, he welcomed former U.S. State Secretary Condoleezza Rice to Haiti, where she stressed the need for local officials to accelerate the process to hold general elections. Latortue said at the time that his administration shared the same concerns as the U.S. government and the international community, and that the administration would honor the results of the upcoming elections. □

Big reception for survey “Literary Life on Aruba”

(Oranjestad)—Recently, there has been a survey published for the public, in which investigators explore the reasons for the decline in literary life on Aruba and ways to fix this.

The commission leading the investigation regarding literary life on Aruba reunited to work on three points of interest. This investigation covers a variety of areas like secondary schools, libraries, book shops, authors and readers. For each area, the investigator Mr. Nicolaas designed a list of questions, specifically about their field. Based on the answers for these questions, investigators may explain the rea-

sons why literary life on the island is stuck and perhaps suggest way to improve this.

This commission, consisting of Dr. J. Pereira, Dr. W. Rutgers and Dr. F. Guadeloupe, revised all the surveys and gave their recommendations. The enthusiasm within the community to participate in this survey was overwhelming. This was evident from the number of people who registered their email survey.literature@gmail.com to receive the survey. Soon there will be an online version of the survey on different websites like the ‘Lanta Papiamentu Foundation’ (FLP) and Career IQ, where the survey

can be found one click away.

In the past, there have been many talks and insinuations about the literary life on Aruba, but there were no data to substantiate these statements. There are a lot of factors that play a role and attention must be paid to this. However, with this investigation, it is finally possible to point out the weaknesses and look for ways to remedy these. According to Mr. Nicolaas, this investigation is the first of its kind and is something that needs to continually take place every 5 to 10 years. This way we can keep monitoring this field and build a healthy and strong country. □



Minister Endy Croes meets with the FEPA foundation



(Oranjestad)—Recently, Minister of Education, Endy Croes, met with the director of the FEPA foundation, Mr. Randolph Vrolijk, and policy officer Mr. Jerehm Capmbell. Also present were di-

rector of the Education Inspectorate Service Aruba, Mr. John Hessen and director of the Department of Education Aruba, Mrs. Anne Marie Proveyer.

During this meeting, FEPA brought forth different peti-

tions that they have made since last October. One of these concerns the establishment of a MAVO secondary school completely in Papiamentu for drop outs with a difficulty with the Dutch language.

Besides this, they also made a petition to open 5 new studies on ABO 1 level, which is equivalent to the level MBO 1 in Bonaire. Those who may or may not have finished primary school only can enroll in this study, and hence improve their chances for better job opportunities.

These 5 studies are as followed: 1. Assistant service and care worker; 2. Sales/Retail Assistant; 3. Hospitality, food or food industry assistant; 4. Building, living and maintenance assistant; 5. Assistant plant, animal or (green) living environment worker.

Bonaire will also assist in this project, seeing as it already has these studies and FEPA's intention is to buy these from Bonaire and establish them in Aruba.

Before realizing this project, FEPA must turn in a study guide to see how these studies will be structured. Afterwards, the Department of Education Aruba and Education Inspectorate Service Aruba need to evaluate these in order to make sure that the diplomas are recognized. Finally, the Minister of Education, Mr. Endy Croes, will be advised whether to give aprovable to this petition or not. □

Minister Glenbert Croes meets with House Representative for New Hampshire, USA, Mr. Brian D. Cole

(Oranjestad)—Minister of Energy Glenbert Croes met with Representative Brian D. Cole during his visit on the island. During his stay, Representative Cole took the time to share with the Aruban government his vision for new technological projects concerning generating electricity using tidal movements.

Seeing as the government possesses an interest in generating electricity through more economic means, this indeed captured the minister's attention. This will also put

Representative Cole in contact with state energy businesses.

There will be a follow-up meeting so Representative Cole can introduce the government to American companies interested in helping Aruba with this technological method called Tidal Generation of Electricity.

Minister Croes is very grateful to be able to host Representative Cole and for his interest to help develop the island. □



LOCAL



Costa Linda celebrated their Carnaval and Queen Coronation party



Costa Linda is accustomed to celebrating Carnaval and Queen Coronation Party, and this February 15th was no exception. Guests and owners were able to enjoy an afternoon with finger foods, refreshments, special guests, colors, fantasy and music.

This lovely afternoon started with the former Queens parade around the pool, which was accompanied by Quality Brassband and dancers in Carnaval costumes. The parade ended in the lobby, where the MC's announced the special guests of the day which

were; Miss Aruba Kiarah Arends, Aruba's Carnaval Childrens Queen Ziah, Aruba's Carnaval Teen Queen Jennely Winklaar, Aruba's Carnaval Queen Adriane Jacobs and Aruba's Mrs. Carnaval Shera Alberts.

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Beauty & THE BEACH

Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to **Alicia and Jorge from Argentina**, who said their favorite thing on the island is Eagle beach. Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!

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Costa Linda celebrated their Carnaval and Queen Coronation party



Continued from Page 8

Costa Linda's own Princess and Queens were crowned by the special guests; Cami York was crowned as Tourist Princess of 2023, Emma Wetzel was crowned as Tourist Teen Queen of 2023, Mary Sue Berry was crowned as Tourist Queen of 2023 and Joanne Frans was crowned as Employee Queen of 2023.

The show was followed by special performances from the 2nd finalist of the Tumba Festival Giliane Wester and the 2nd finalist of the Roadmarch Contest Easy B. The event was finalized with Impressive Dancers who performed a carnival dance show.

Guests and owners alike surely went home with a great carnival experience. □



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Travellers' Choice 2020

Sea turtle conservation by Turtugaruba Foundation



ORANJESTAD — Turtugaruba was founded on September 3rd, 2003 by a group of enthusiastic volunteers. Ten years earlier, in 1993, a Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan (STRAP) was introduced in Aruba and the rest of the Caribbean as an initiative of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Tom Barmes, who was working at DLVV (Department of Agriculture, Husbandry and Fishery) was one of the writers of the STRAP for Aruba, together with Karen Eckert, director of WIDECAST (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network). This is how sea turtle conservation started on the island following a plan that is still complied with today.

Tom formed a group of volunteers around him, because nature does not know office hours,

like an organization such as DLVV. This group of volunteers used the name Widecast Aruba and today there are still a few of them active. They first started protecting the Leatherback Sea Turtle nests on Palm Beach and Eagle Beach. This group also investigated which other species of sea turtles use Aruba as their nesting habitat and which beaches are used by them. For a period of 25 years a study has been conducted in which every early morning the beach was being monitored in which now there is a good overview of sea turtle nesting activities.

There are 4 different sea turtle species that visit Aruba to lay their eggs, each with their own specific season:

- Leatherback Sea Turtle - Leder-schildpad - Driekiel (March – Sep-

tember)

- Loggerhead Sea Turtle - Dikkop-schildpad - Cawama (May – September)

- Hawksbill Sea Turtle - Karetschildpad - Caret (June – December)

- Green Turtle - Soepschildpad - Turtuga Blanco (July-November)

There also came a better understanding and overview of the biggest threats to the sea turtles existence in Aruba and how these problems should be tackled. Despite hard work, all those years, most problems have not really gone away, but luckily and thanks to the enormous efforts from the volunteers, the sea turtles are still here. On Aruba the sea turtles are threatened with extinction by pollution, driving on dunes and beaches with quads and 4x4's and the loss of nesting beaches due to coastal development on behalf of tourism. Because coastal development comes with artificial light and artificial light is a mayor issue for sea turtles, mother turtle usually comes on shore at night looking for a dark beach to make her nest. However... a dark beach is hard to find here nowadays. Light causes stress and can result in her returning to the sea without laying her eggs. Artificial light causes disorientation for the baby sea turtles (hatchlings).

They crawl towards artificial light sources (like streetlights, hotel lights, etc.) and then they don't find the sea. In the 90's it was still a common occurrence to find a complete nest of about 70 hatchlings on the streets, dead, as cars



drove over them. Thanks to their protection methods and a lot of time and effort, the volunteers of Turtugaruba have managed to get this under control. But for a sustainable solution there must be less light visible on the beaches and a strict regulation of it. Sea turtles simply need dark nesting beaches for their survival. It is clear that even more coastal development would not make the situation better for the sea turtles. Again, more hotel rooms? And even busier beaches? These are choices Aruba has to make. Do we want to leave a place for the sea turtles? Not only Aruba, but the entire world needs sea turtles! Sea turtles play a vital role in keeping our oceans healthy.

The Green Turtle, for example, keeps the sea grasses on the bottom of the sea short and therefore a healthy place for many fish to deposit their eggs. The Leatherback, the largest turtle of the world, eats mainly jellyfish and helps maintain the balance between jellyfish and plankton. Despite the threats that exist on Aruba, the turtles still keep coming. That's why today Turtugaruba is especially proud of the volunteers and the many people and organizations of our community that carry a warm place in their hearts for the sea turtles. All four species are active now, which means all hands on deck in the field for us, the volunteers. We strive to keep the sea turtles, our oldest 'repeat guests', always coming back to Aruba and get the chance to reproduce here.

What you can do to protect the sea turtles

- Lights out for sea turtles.
- Do not drive on beaches.
- Do not litter. Do not leave any plastic cups, straws or bags on the beach.
- Remove obstacles from the beach.
- Do not disturb a nesting sea turtle. Do not attempt to touch the turtle but stay at a respectful distance (at least 10 meters).
- Do call Turtugaruba (24 hour Turtle Hotline: (297) 5929393). For more information visit the facebook page Turtugaruba Foundation. □



Gershwin Lee: a headmaster who is more like a coach for his students

The teacher as well as the student are people, and before everything, must be seen as people. That is the philosophy of Gershwin Lee, headmaster of the MAVO school, Colegio San Antonio.

Lee had just finished supervising a 'strafmid-dag' – afternoon detention – when he spoke with our reporter. A group of students unhappy that they had to spend a Friday afternoon at school is not exactly an ideal situation, but the headmaster doesn't let any opportunity go by without connecting with his students. "They feel that the teacher doesn't like them, they told me. Many times it is a teacher who gave them a low grade." And what Lee told them was that by getting lower grades, the children reinforce the bad impression that the teacher might have of them, but the negative consequences fall on them.

He knew of which teacher the kids were talking, someone who has an interest but follows a stricter line. When the headmaster asked the kids why they don't make an effort, the answer was that "I don't want the teacher to think that I'm a teacher's pet". In that moment, Lee gave them a challenge, to ask the teacher directly if he thinks they have a perspective. "I told them that they will be surprised by the answer, because I'm sure that the teacher will say that he does believe in them, as long as they apply themselves."

After the conversation, Lee let the kids watch the documentary about gymnast Simone Biles, who despite having addicts as parents who couldn't give attention to their child; she was adopted by her grandparents. "The difference is the mindset. The idea was for the children to realize that trauma doesn't need to be an obstacle. Everyone has trauma. A child who gets screamed at by a teacher when he was in first grade because he couldn't read well will be left with trauma. The point is how you deal with trauma."

Perhaps the most surprising aspect is that Gershwin Lee told the students that he also experienced a challenging youth. His father, the late Atan Lee was an extremely strict parent who didn't hesitate to use physical discipline and demanded perfection at school from his children. Gershwin as the older of three would rebel. His grades in MAVO were nothing to be proud of, and his rebellion continued until after finishing HBO (Dutch equivalent to college). His father dreamed of his son receiving the title 'drs', and Lee got all the way to his thesis and then decided not to do it. He informed his father, who was obviously disappointed, and then moved to Spain where he obtained his Masters in Business Administration with specialization in marketing and public relations.

The trajectory however made Lee realize why his father was so focused on his children's achievements. "My father grew up poor in a big family. A male child of Chinese heritage, who was a victim of bullying, managed to overcome and wanted the best for his children. He couldn't believe it himself how much he achieved. No



one believed in him when he was a child." The realization that his father's demands were the result of trauma allowed Gershwin to accept that the disciplinarian was simply a father who loved him and wanted the best for him.

And these stories, Lee tells them to the students of Colegio San Antonio. This however does not mean that it's not necessary to recognize the difficulty that some students are going through, because often, the attitude and arrogance of some students hides the lack of a parent's love, or the fact that the family is poor. Such attitudes are reflected in the results, and sometimes parents have a hard time understanding this. Gershwin applies the same human approach with the parents, some of whom sometimes come to school very angry.

From the start, ever since he was a teacher, Gershwin noticed that the best way to see the student, the parent, or the colleague is first as a person, holistically. For this reason also it is important for Gershwin to have personal contact with parents, to really get to know them. And he asks all of them the same question: "How was your day yesterday? How are you this morning, what did you have to eat?" This way of showing interest tears down walls and allows him to come closer to people, in order to reach the core of any conflict. A student (who is not a 'repeat client') who approaches him because the teacher kicked him out of school will not get scolded, but will be approached by a person who wants to know more about the life of the student. "I see what his fears, doubts and complexes are, if he is afraid."

The way in which Gershwin Lee deals with people is thus more like a coach than a strict disciplinarian. He doesn't leave out that there are rules to be followed, but in order to demand adherence, Lee believes it is essential to motivate the student as well as the teacher so that both want to work on improvement.

It might be part of his personality, but Gershwin Lee explains that from early on he realized the importance of a different approach, and he followed all courses and training possible on this area, from Conscious Discipline to yoga, which provide techniques to help anyone breathe in and calm down.

The results can be seen, because Colegio San Antonio already has years on top of the list of schools with a better percentage of graduates. But this is not what motivates the headmaster. "If you take the first exam period from last year, our school was the one with the worst results. There was the possibility for every student to drop their lowest grade (an arrangement due to the pandemic) and still graduate. But I told them to still take the second chance exam and improve their grade."

The headmaster motivated his students to believe in themselves and assured them that they will graduate. The result of the school in itself was not important for Lee. Rather, his objective was for the students to grow and realize their potential and be happy people, an approach that is proven to work. □

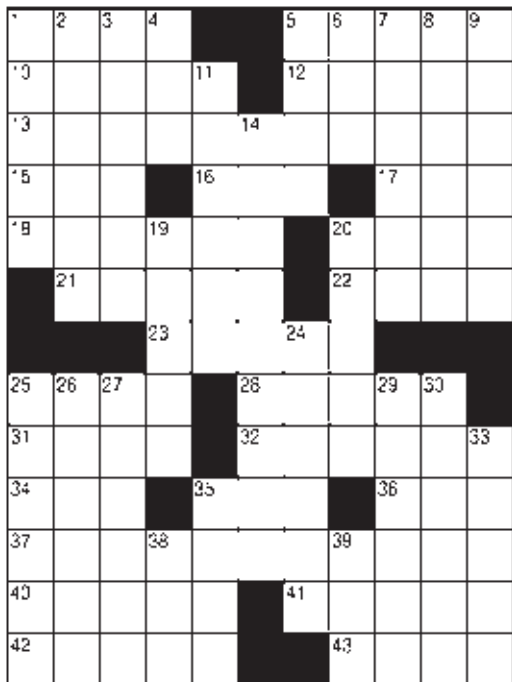
CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

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35 Cold War side
38 Glimpse
39 Bossy's chew



Yesterday's answer



2-28

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-28 **CRYPTOQUOTE**
GPZOBUP PFP AJUDBYV, YL LYP

HXY GBHUXUP QDL JLW XAP

UL LUDPA OPLONP, — OARYHP
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: GENTLENESS CLEARS THE SOUL. LOVE CLEANS THE MIND AND MAKES IT FREE. DAVID BOWIE

Kimberly Palmer: 5 ways to deal with money envy

By KIMBERLY PALMER
of NerdWallet

If you've ever scrolled through social media posts only to be gripped with envy when you see a friend posing in front of their beautiful house or enjoying themselves at a luxurious resort, then you understand how easy it is to want what other people have. Financial envy is real, and sometimes it can be ugly.

"Financial envy is absolutely normal. It's part of the human condition," says Yvonne Hampton, who holds a doctorate in personal financial planning and runs a financial therapy practice in the Kansas City, Missouri, area.

And it's not necessarily a bad thing, she adds. "It's an opportunity to dig more deeply internally about why we have that feeling so we can work through it and be happier in our own lives."

If you're wondering how to turn the so-called green-eyed monster into a positive force in your life, here are five steps to take.

1. LET GO OF SHAME

"A lot of progress can be made simply by acknowledging: 'Yes, I feel envious,'" says Rick Kahler, a certified financial therapist and certified financial planner in Rapid City, South Dakota. "Be compassionate toward yourself," he adds.

Then, you can more easily turn toward the concrete steps that help you meet your financial goals, whether it's paying off debt, saving for a down payment or building up an emergency fund for greater financial security.

2. GET SPECIFIC ABOUT YOUR TRIGGERS

People are more likely to feel envious of people in

their own peer group versus mega-rich icons like Jeff Bezos or Oprah Winfrey, Hampton says. "Those feelings are a signal: If you are envious of a neighbor getting a new car, what is that feeling?"

Perhaps it's rooted in a desire to earn more money or spend your money differently. Once you figure out

the cause of the feeling, then you can address it and make changes in your own life.

"It can give us insight into what we really want," Hampton says. If it truly is about buying a car, then you can give yourself a savings goal and start setting money aside each month. □

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Jeff Probst a constant for 'Survivor' as it nears 44th game

By **DAVID BAUDER**

AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — There was a time Jeff Probst could not imagine doing what he will on Wednesday, being on hand as host for the start of a 44th season of "Survivor." That's not simply because of the transitory nature of television, where a 44th season of anything is a rarity, even a program that created a sensation when it first aired on CBS in the summer of 2000.

In those early days, there was a restlessness about Probst. He'd studied screenwriting, acted and wrote and directed a well-received indie film in 2001. He tried a short-lived talk show. He admits "I had a chip on my shoulder about being called a 'host.'" Yet as series creator Mark Burnett began stepping away, Probst added "producer" to his title and has since ascended to the level of "showrunner" — industry lingo that means he's in charge of everything.

At age 61, he's all in, an evangelist for "Survivor."

"I have never been so excited to be part of the show," he told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "I hope it's apparent. I hope it's clear that I'm really into 'Survivor.'"

It remains a marvelously-designed game, one that tests survival skills in a for-



This image released by CBS shows Jeff Probst in the premiere episode of the 44th season of the reality competition series "Survivor," airing March 1.

Associated Press

bidding — if lovely — environment along with the social and scheming skills to remain standing at the end to collect the \$1 million prize. Even if one cast is a drag, "one of the show's greatest strengths is that every season hits a reset button," said Dalton Ross, executive editor at large at Entertainment Weekly and a veteran chronicler of the show.

So it can, um, survive a scandal like a player being kicked off in 2019 after being accused of inap-

propriately touching young women or tweaks that don't work, like the "fire tokens" that were introduced and abandoned after one season.

Other new ideas, like a hidden immunity idol or the "David vs Goliath" season that Probst really loved, freshen the show as it adheres to a basic structure. Producers were also ordered by CBS to increase diversity, which Probst said has added to the show's richness. The 18 castaways for the new season include

five Black contestants, three Latinos and an Asian American.

"People that don't watch 'Survivor,' I think they may mistake it for some sort of survivalist's show or they label it with this idea that it's just a reality show," Probst said. "When, really, 'Survivor' is one of the biggest adventures you can ever go on, either as a player or a viewer."

As Probst became more involved in how the show was put together, there was a clear difference in how he

did his job onscreen, Ross said.

"Jeff started to put more opinion and personality into his hosting," he said. "Up to that point, it was more of a master of ceremonies role. You realized he could be the eyes and ears of the audience and can speak for the audience. It was one of the most important changes he made as a host. It made him an element in the game that the players had to contend with." "Survivor" has settled on Fiji as a permanent set after bouncing around for several years to different locations. The jungle is a character in itself. High-definition photography and drones makes things more visually appealing than ever, Ross said.

Probst demurs when asked his opinion of the best player ever, and admits some of the seasons start to run together. He'd lose a "Survivor" trivia contest, he said.

"I will see an early cut of an episode, and I can't remember who was voted out, even though I was the one at Tribal Council who snuffed out their torch," he said.

And, yes, he's excited about the new season, calling it one of the most entertaining groups of players the show has put together in a while. □

Armani at heart of new doc examining birth of Milan fashion



Designer, left, Giorgio Armani and Marisa Berenson pose for photographers upon arrival for the premiere of the film 'Milano, the inside story of Milan Fashion' in Milan, Italy, Sunday, Feb. 26, 2023.

Associated Press

By **COLLEEN BARRY**

AP Fashion Writer

Giorgio Armani and a slew of fashion CEOs turned out

Sunday for a premiere of documentary "Milano: The Inside Story of Italian Fashion," by Emmy-winning film-

maker John Maggio.

The documentary gives due credit to Armani for putting Milan ready-to-wear on the map in the 1980s with the creation of the deconstructed jacket that made menswear sexy and relaxed, as epitomized by Richard Gere in "American Gigolo."

"Fashion made me grow up and become someone. It was not easy initially, as I didn't feel up to it, but slowly I gained courage to want to be someone in this adventure," Armani said upon arrival at the premiere.

The 88-year-old designer, who presented his latest womenswear collection

earlier in the day, received an enormous round of applause at the start of the film, when producer Alan Friedman introduced him to the very-fashion crowd as "the man without whom today Milan would not be the capital of fashion."

The documentary also recounts the competitive tensions between Armani and his classic elegance and Gianni Versace, who helped fuel the super model era with his more overtly sexy collections.

In the documentary, former Gucci creative director Tom Ford and ex-Gucci CEO Domenico De Sole discuss attempts to merge

Gucci and Versace, which ultimately failed after Versace's 1997 murder under the insistence of his sister, Donatella Versace, that she remain at the creative helm.

In the intervening years, Gucci, along with many other Italian family-run companies have been bought up by French conglomerates, and Versace is now part of the U.S. group Capri Holding. Italy has failed to come up with a fashion group of its own to challenge the French dominance; fashion houses like Armani and Dolce & Gabbana are among those that remain staunchly in family hands. □

U.S. women's soccer coach paid 27% as much as men's coach

By **RONALD BLUM**

AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. women's coach Vlatko Andonovski earned 27% as much as men's coach Gregg Berhalter in the year ending last March 31, down slightly from 28% in the previous year.

Andonovski earned \$446,495, according to the U.S. Soccer Federation's tax filing released Monday, including \$50,000 in bonuses for the Americans' third-place finish in the Tokyo Olympics. Berhalter earned \$1,641,398, including \$300,000 in bonuses during a year that included the 2021 CONCACAF Gold Cup title.

Berhalter remained the federation's highest-paid employee. In the previous fiscal year, Andonovski earned \$357,597 and Berhalter \$1,291,539.

Earnie Stewart earned \$799,380 as the USSF's sporting director, virtually identical to his \$799,699 the prior year. Men's general manager Brian McBride earned \$346,494, a slight increase from \$338,417.

Women's general manager Kate Markgraf was at \$500,000 for the second straight year. She also has the title of head of women's football and her duties include interacting with



U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski, right, and forward Megan Rapinoe (15) laugh after the team's win against Canada during a SheBelieves Cup soccer match Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023, in Orlando, Fla.
Associated Press

FIFA, CONCACAF and national associations.

CEO Will Wilson earned \$642,348 and his predecessor, Dan Flynn, was listed at \$251,886 as an ambassador and former officer.

In a huge management turnover, Wilson left Oct. 31, McBride on Jan. 31 and Stewart on Feb. 15.

Berhalter's status is unclear after the expiration of his contract on Dec. 31. He is under investigation for a 1991 domestic violence allegation. Anthony Hudson, one of his assistants, was

appointed interim coach last month. Chief commercial officer David Wright earned \$516,257 and Pinky Raina, the chief financial officer and chief operating officer, earned \$466,864. Chief legal officer Karen Leetzow earned \$410,714. Cindy Parlow Cone, the USSF president, does not receive a salary. A bylaw amendment to establish a \$125,000 annual salary for the federation's president failed to gain approval at the federation's annual general meeting last

March, receiving 58.91% approval and falling short of the two-thirds needed. A similar proposal is on the agenda for this year's meeting, scheduled for March 16-19 in San Diego. John Cone, her husband, received \$50,280 as payment and expense reimbursement for his work with the USSF coaching education team, down from \$112,606 the previous year. Among players on the women's team, listed players included Emily Sonnett (\$386,742), Becky Sauerb-

runn (\$379,067), Carli Lloyd (\$376,827, listed as her married name, Carli Hollins), Kelly O'Hara (\$375,177) and Alyssa Naeher (\$373,327). The USSF received \$29.9 million from Soccer United Marketing, the marketing arm of Major League Soccer as part of an agreement that expired this past Dec. 31.

Legal fees included \$4.9 million to Lathan & Watkins, which represented the USSF in the equal pay lawsuit by women's players, and \$1.4 million to Morgan Lewis & Bockius, which represented the USSF in collective bargaining.

Revenue was listed at \$122.3 million and functional expenses at \$145.1 million, including \$24 million to settle the lawsuit by women players and \$2 million for COVID-related costs.

The federation said it had \$108.8 million in what it called program service revenue, including \$45.8 million from sponsorship and \$44.8 million from national team international games. That was up from \$39.98 million in sponsor and royalty revenue in the year ending March 2021 and \$3.5 million from national team international games, which were sharply curtailed during the pandemic and played in front of no or limited fans. □

Novak Djokovic breaks record for most weeks ranked No. 1

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**

AP Tennis Writer

Novak Djokovic broke the record for the most time spent at No. 1 in the professional tennis rankings by a man or woman, beginning his 378th week in the ATP's top spot on Monday to surpass Steffi Graf's 377 leading the WTA.

He already held the men's mark, eclipsing Roger Federer's old ATP standard of 310 weeks in March 2021.

"I'm flattered, obviously. Extremely, extremely proud and happy for this achievement," Djokovic said in a video posted on social media, in which he referred to

Graf as "one of the greatest, most legendary, tennis players."

After Djokovic and Graf on the all-time No. 1 weeks list are Martina Navratilova, with 332, and Serena Williams, with 319, followed by Federer. The computerized rankings began in the 1970s.

Djokovic has finished seven years atop the ATP, another men's record.

The 35-year-old from Serbia returned to No. 1 this time by winning the Australian Open in January, jumping up from No. 5 to overtake Carlos Alcaraz. That title was Djokovic's 22nd at a

Grand Slam tournament, equalling Rafael Nadal for the most by a man in tennis history.

He managed to get back to the top of the rankings despite not being able to enter a handful of big tournaments in 2022, including the Australian Open and U.S. Open, because is not vaccinated against COVID-19.

Djokovic was able to compete at Melbourne Park this year after Australia relaxed its pandemic-era rules; his status for two key events in the United States that begin in March — at Indian Wells and Miami — is still in



Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic speaks and gestures during his open practise session in Belgrade, Serbia, Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2023.
Associated Press

doubt, and he's asked for permission to be allowed to travel to the country.

Djokovic also did not get any boost from his championship at Wimbledon in 2022, because no rankings points were awarded there.

The ATP and WTA both with-

held points in response to the All England Club's decision to bar players from Russia and Belarus from competing as a result of the invasion of Ukraine. It is still not known whether those athletes will be allowed to play at Wimbledon this year. □

Mets' Scherzer loves 'cat-and-mouse' game of MLB's new rules

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (AP)

— New York Mets right-hander Max Scherzer described pitching under Major League Baseball's new rules as a "cat-and-mouse" game.

Contrary to previous years, Scherzer feels the pitcher finally has control of the tempo because of the new pitch clock.

In his first start of the Grapefruit League schedule, Scherzer allowed a run in the second inning but struck out five while working the first two innings of the Mets' 6-3 win over Washington.

"Really, the power the pitcher has now — I can totally dictate pace," the three-time Cy Young Award winner said. "The rule change of the hitter having only one timeout changes the complete dynamic of the hitter-and-pitcher dynamic. Yeah, I love it."

The pitch clock is among a series of new rules for this season — including limits on infield shifts and larger bases — that MLB hopes will improve pace of play and introduce more action into the game.

The average game time through three days of spring training is 2 hours, 39 minutes, down from an average of 3:01 for all of spring training last year.

Scherzer says he is learn-



New York Mets starting pitcher Max Scherzer throws during the second inning of a spring training baseball game against the Washington Nationals Sunday, Feb. 26, 2023, in Port St. Lucie, Fla.

Associated Press

ing to play around with the pitch clock.

Washington's Michael Chavis, the second hitter in the second inning, stepped out of the box when he felt Scherzer was taking too long. That was fine with Scherzer.

The right-hander held the ball for more than 10 seconds before delivering the next pitch as Chavis had to remain in the batter's box, locked eyes with Scherzer. The veteran pitcher felt he had imposed his will, even though Chavis ultimately singled to right.

"I can work extremely

quick. And I can work extremely slow," Scherzer said. "There's another layer here to be able to mess with the hitter's timing."

"I can come set even before the hitter's in the box. I can't pitch until eight (seconds left on the clock). But as soon as his eyes are up, I can go. If his eyes are up with 12 seconds to go, I can fire."

"I had the conversation with the umpire (David Rackley) to make sure that's legal. And that is (legal). I'm just getting used to how this is going to be in 2023."

According to MLB, there

were 69 pitch-timer violations through the first 35 spring training games over the weekend — including 35 violations in 16 games Sunday.

While Scherzer thinks the timer is working in pitchers' favor, hitters aren't complaining, either.

"I like it," Yankees star Aaron Judge said. "I think you can kind of play around with it a little bit. I think it definitely speeds up the game. Anything that kind of keeps the pitcher moving and on the go, and hopefully keep him out of breath, I'm looking forward to it."

Cardinals manager Oliver Marmol said MLB is providing updates — nearly in real time — on the rules changes package that is making this spring training unique. The two major changes are a pitch clock and a limit on extreme infield shifts.

"They did a really nice job of sending out a memo this morning with all the things that took place yesterday and questions that players and managers that just had to be addressed in order that you can cover it with your staff and club as you feel appropriate," Marmol said. "So we did that with our staff and brought two different points with our players because they've done a really good job of communication."

There were more hiccups on Sunday throughout the Cactus and Grapefruit League games, but most took the changes in stride. Rockies reliever Daniel Bard was called for a ball after throwing a warmup pitch after the 30-second deadline heading into an inning. The 30-second mark before innings was also a source of confusion during the Cardinals-Marlins game. Two Cardinals pitchers were called for balls before the start of innings before, according to Marmol, the umpires gathered and realized they were interpreting the rule incorrectly. □



Kansas City Royals' Bobby Witt Jr. (7) beats the tag by Texas Rangers shortstop Corey Seager to steal first base during the first inning of a spring training baseball game Friday, Feb. 24, 2024, in Surprise, Ariz.

Associated Press

By RONALD BLUM
AP Baseball Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — Major

League Baseball's average salary rose 14.8% to a record \$4.22 million last

MLB average salary rose 14.8% to record \$4.22M last season

year after the end of the lockout, boosted by big deals for Max Scherzer, Francisco Lindor, Marcus Semien and Corey Seager. The rate of increase was the highest since a 17.7% increase in 2000 to \$1.61 million, according to final calculations by the players' association.

The average had dropped in each of the previous four seasons before 2022, sparking player anger that was expressed by the union during a 99-day lockout that ended last March.

Last year's average salary was calculated by the union at \$4,222,193, up from \$3,679,335 in 2021. MLB, which uses a slightly different method, calculated the average at \$4,117,472, up 15% from \$3,579,341 in 2021.

Payrolls, a more complete reflection on spending, rose 12.6% to \$4.56 billion from \$4.05 billion. Salaries have escalated higher this past offseason. The Mets have boosted their payroll to a projected \$370 million, well past the previous record of \$297.9

million of the 2015 Los Angeles Dodgers.

Some owners are arguing for significant change to lessen payroll disparity when the current labor contract expires after the 2026 season, and MLB this month established another committee to examine economics.

"History would suggest that an economic committee ... is really hyperfocused on a salary cap — or getting to a salary cap when we next sit down to negotiate," union head Tony Clark said Saturday. □